

Minh Leu

Testimony for Senate Bill 899

My name is Minh Leu, and I am currently a junior at Hall High School in West Hartford. About three years ago, I became disturbed when I learned my state still had discrimination written in its laws targeted towards its gay residents. I had learned in history class that Separate is never Equal. So, I wanted to help change the discrimination so that gay and lesbian couples could legally marry instead of having civil unions.

Because of the historic Supreme Court Case “Brown versus the Board of Education” verdict, which stated that Separate is Not Equal, I can say that I am proud to go to a Connecticut Public High School. I not only learn about diversity in my school; I see it everywhere. There are people of every race and religion, who speak dozens of different languages, who come from every corner of the world, all in one school. In my experience, it has been extremely beneficial for schools to teach love, instead of hate, and to teach diversity, instead of uniformity. There is no part of Senate Bill 899 that requires schools to teach anything – what will be taught in schools will continue to be decided by the local boards of education. Thus, I am puzzled to see that anti-equality advocates are here today to lobby for schools to disregard homosexuality as part of the diversity that makes up American culture.

In order to join the cause to change the laws, I began volunteering at Love makes a Family during the summer of 2007. While I was volunteering there, I came into contact with all sorts of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and transgendered people. I learned that these people were nothing like what the anti-gay community made them out to be. I learned that the people in this community were exactly like everyone else; some were nice, some

weren't, some had kids, some were single, some had a master's degree from Yale, some had none at all. It was when I had this epiphany when I realized how wrong it was for my state to deny such a fundamental and important civil right to such a large group of people. I experienced this compelling feeling to go out in my community and change this blatant discrimination.

I began to go to towns and cities all over Connecticut such as Derby, Farmington, Hartford, Middletown, and Portland, to speak with hundreds of different people and to get hundreds of signatures for a pro-gay marriage petition. I was surprised to see that people of every race, socioeconomic status, age, gender, and religion, agreed that Gay Marriage should be legal in Connecticut. It was my experiences working with these people from all over the state that I gained the hope that legislators would go along with this consensus, and pass gay marriage.

But, I am pleased that the Supreme Court changed the discriminatory laws; on October 10th, 2008, a majority of Justices ruled that it was unconstitutional to deny gays the right to marry. And on November 12th, 2008, the first marriage licenses were handed out to gay couples, and surprisingly, the apocalypse has not come yet.

Please Support Senate Bill 899, and thank you so much for listening to me speak today.